



Brazil on Film

The Margin

The Margin A Margem

Director: Ozualdo R. Candeias

Producers: Ozualdo R. Candeias, Michael Saggi

Screenplay: Ozualdo R. Candeias

Director of Photography: Berlamindo Mancini

Editor: Ozualdo R. Candeias

Music: Luiz Chaves

Sound: Estélio Carlini, Júlio Perez Caballar

Cast:

Mário Benvenutti

Valéria Vidal

Bentinho

Lucy Rangel

Telé Karé

Paulo Ramos

Brazil 1967

96 mins

Digital (restoration)

Brazil on Film

We Are Also Brothers Também Somos Irmãos

Fri 1 May 18:20 (+ intro by Dr Felipe Botelho

Correa, King's College London); Sat 30 May 15:20

Boy and the World O Menino e o Mundo

Sat 2 May 12:15; Sun 24 May 12:30

Black God, White Devil

Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol

Sat 2 May 18:10; Sat 16 May 16:00;

Fri 29 May 20:35; Sat 30 May 20:30

São Paulo Incorporated

São Paulo Sociedade Anônima

Mon 4 May 18:30; Thu 14 May 20:40

The Margin A Margem

Fri 8 May 21:00; Thu 21 May 18:15

At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul

À Meia-Noite Levarei Sua Alma

Sat 9 May 13:00 (+ intro by Dr Bruna Foletto Lucas,

University of Hertfordshire); Tue 19 May 20:40

Bye Bye Brazil Bye Bye Brasil

Sat 9 May 18:15; Sat 23 May 14:30 (+ intro by

Dr Antonio da Silva, University of Essex)

City of God Cidade de Deus

Sat 9 May 20:20; Sat 23 May 17:15;

Thu 28 May 18:00

Neighbouring Sounds O Som ao Redor

Sun 10 May 14:40; Sun 17 May 18:10;

Fri 22 May 20:25

Man Marked for Death, Twenty Years Later

Cabra Marcado Para Morrer

Sun 10 May 18:15; Mon 25 May 18:20

Chuck Billy and the Marvelous Guava Tree

Chico Bento e a Goiabeira Maraviósa

Sun 10 May 12:15; Sat 23 May 12:20

Manas

Mon 11 May 18:00 (+ intro by season co-curator

Renata de Almeida); Sun 31 May 18:30

Lower City Cidade Baixa

Mon 11 May 20:50 (+ intro by season co-curator

Renata de Almeida); Wed 27 May 20:55

An Introduction to Brazil on Film

Tue 12 May 18:15

Foreign Land Terra Estrangeira

Tue 12 May 20:20 (+ Q&A with co-director Daniela

Thomas); Tue 26 May 18:15

A rowing boat drifts towards the margin of São Paulo's Tietê river. People on shore stare as it passes by; we might imagine that we are its passengers. This impression remains even after the boat moors and a woman disembarks. Four people, apparently two couples, gather around their new visitor; but she soon vanishes from *The Margin*, Ozualdo Ribeiro Candeias' debut feature, while the margin's residents carry on gazing into the camera, as if we have been left to move about in her place.

The film follows its four central, largely silent figures as they roam this impoverished part of the city, then themselves depart by boat. They are a pudgy, nervous-looking man (played by Mario Benvenutti) in a rumpled white suit; a barefoot, seductively posing woman (Valéria Vidal) who accompanies him; a younger woman (Lucy Rangel) exploited by men in her search for secretarial work; and a saintly, flower-bearing fool (Bentinho), smitten with her, who darts through his surroundings with a dancer's grace. Dwellers in shanty-town houses direct a full, steady gaze at passers-by, sometimes welcoming them, sometimes asking for help.

The Margin presents its people in startlingly straightforward fashion, forcing us into an intimacy with them while allowing them to keep their distance from us. As in later films, Candeias created a thin layer of fiction in order for viewers to look past it and see a greater reality. By making his black-and-white film as a series of essentially silent movements, with a musical soundtrack underlining wordless scenes, he left viewers with poetic space to imagine what life in the margins of the world might feel like.

Several scenes from *The Margin* appear in the recent documentary *Ozualdo Candeias and the Cinema* (2013), a feature-length compilation film directed by Eugênio Puppó which excerpts works from throughout Candeias' career. The bulk of Candeias' films – made between 1955 and 1993 – are out of circulation today, even in his native Brazil. In the meantime, the documentary allows viewers to familiarise themselves with the work of one of the greatest Brazilian filmmakers.

It also introduces them to Candeias himself, who died in 2007, aged 85. Archive audio captures a larger-than-life figure who insisted on doing as many jobs on his films as possible, including writing, directing, producing, cinematography and editing. Candeias once said he wouldn't take advice on filmmaking because he didn't want to make anyone's mistakes but his own.

On release, *The Margin* was a critical and commercial success, celebrated as a rare film that showed the problems of Brazil's largest city. (The contemporaneous Cinema Novo movement was centred on Rio de Janeiro.) It inspired a brief but rich period of experimental Brazilian filmmaking, known today as Cinema Marginal, much of whose activity took place in Boca do Lixo ('Mouth of Garbage'), the downtown São Paulo area where Candeias lived, and which he chronicled in films and photographs.

Candeias did not consider himself an innovator, and claimed no disciples. He rejected suggestions of influence, too, claiming not to have seen the European films to which his critics made reference. He said that he had little interest in watching films, taking inspiration from what he had seen during his daily work.

Mars One Marte Um

Fri 15 May 18:20 (+ intro by Marta Calderón Quiñones, Cinema Mentirê); Sat 23 May 20:30

Cinema Novo

Sat 16 May 18:40; Tue 26 May 20:45

Dolores

Sun 24 May 18:20; Sun 31 May 15:20

Presented as part of the UK/Brazil Season of Culture 2025-26 and supported by Instituto Guimarães Rosa

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He was born in 1922 to impoverished farmers, who moved frequently between the states of Mato Grosso and São Paulo, where Candeias eventually settled. When young he worked at a number of jobs, including as a trucker, a figure who often appears in his films, travelling between city and countryside. His first short films were made with a Keystone 16mm camera, which he learned how to operate by reading every manual he could find. He chose his chief themes early on. His first documentary short, *Tambaú, City of Miracles* (*Tambaú, a cidade dos milagres*, 1955), juxtaposed the work of a faith-healer priest with shots of the impoverished pilgrims travelling to be healed of sickness and wounds.

Candeias attended film school classes in São Paulo prior to making *The Margin*. He also played various roles, in front of and behind the camera, for the actor-director José Mojica Marins, whose highly imaginative low-budget horror films featuring the monstrous 'Coffin Joe' offered crucial filmmaking models for Candeias and other Cinema Marginal artists early in Brazil's period of military dictatorship, which lasted from 1964 to 1985.

Candeias's approach in *The Margin* and subsequent fiction films was to write a basic treatment that was staged by a mixture of trained and untrained actors and developed during the film shoot. The films feel fresh partly because they were invented moment to moment. Their sequences flow intuitively, resulting in story progressions that often feel more rhythmic than narrative.

This held true even when Candeias worked within established genres: horror with *The Agreement* (*O acordo*, a segment of the *Trilogy of Terror*, 1968, co-directed with Marins and Luís Sérgio Person) and the western with *My Name is Tonho* (*Meu nome é Tonho*, 1969). His 1970 version of *Hamlet, A herança* (the title translates as *The Inheritance*), reimagines the play on a farm, preserving none of Shakespeare's dialogue except one song and a few strategically placed subtitles. Instead, the story unfolds through movements between its actors' expressive faces, achieved with perfectly synchronised cuts and zooms, while guitar notes float by.

Candeias was making points about a society that he felt treated human lives as disposable. While other Brazilian artists greeted the end of dictatorship with hope, Candeias believed that for those on society's margins things hadn't improved; and throughout his life he used cinema to bring their problems to wider attention.

Aaron Cutler, *Sight and Sound*, October 2014